

124 The description I have given of the *lahla khombo*, translating
 178 exactly the narratives of Mbozá, Elias, and an old widower called
 164 Magingi, refers to the rite as it was performed in the normal
 783 fashion some twenty years ago amongst the Ba-Ronga. Now
 765 customs are changing. There is, all around the town of Lourenço
 Marques, an agglomeration of Natives coming from many tribes.
 Immorality there has become terrible owing especially to alcoholic
 excesses, a free and enormous sale of adulterated wine taking place
 in this region. The widows are sure to find there a hundred
 men for each of them, when they wish to cast away their defilement.
 But in this promiscuity the poison of syphilis makes terrible
 ravages. According to our medical missionary, 90 % of the
 783 Natives are contaminated by this disease. When the men up
 765 country saw that their wives came back ritually purified but
 178 physically contaminated, they began themselves to accomplish the
 833 necessary act. This has become the general custom to such an
 extent that, when a widow goes to Majlangalen, (such is the name
 of that hell of drunkenness and immorality), it is now said
 of her : "She will refuse to stay with her legal heirs!" However
 the law of the *lahla khombo nhoben*, to cast away the malediction
 in the bush, remains inexorable in the three cases where
 [845] the defilement is considered as being of the worst kind : if the
 husband died of phthisis or of leprosy, or if the woman has
 had twins.

Old widows who can find no lovers may be purified by means
 of drugs.

765 e) *The year of widowhood*. Though the widows have found
 587 new husbands, they still remain in the old kraal. They must
 accomplish there "a full hoe," viz. a whole year of ploughing.
 In their new fields they leave the dry sticks of the mealies of the
 year before, in such a way that everybody passing by will know
 at once that this is the field of a widow. But what they harvest
 this year will belong to the new husband. They have now the
 right to *fambelana*, viz. to go to each other. The suitor brings
 clothing to the woman, and the woman pays him visits with jars
 of beer. They belong more or less to each other. But the
 marriage of the inherited woman is not absolutely settled. Her

PRACTICAL CONCLUSIONS

I. ON THE RITES OF INFANCY (P. 36-61).

~~595~~ ⁸⁵³ The rule that a mother "must plough for her child three hoes" is excellent. It is undoubtedly a splendid preparation for future life to have been fed during three years on mother's milk. Will it be possible to maintain this law under the new conditions of civilized life which are being adopted more and more throughout the tribes? Let us notice that this provision, though it was inspired partly in the interest of the child itself, is dictated mainly by a superstition concerning the lochia secretion, which is regarded as highly noxious and as keeping the mother in an unclean state for a long time. This superstition will not withstand the test of science and will pass away. On the other hand, polygamy was invented and flourishes partly on account of this law. A husband separated from the wife who is nursing a child wishes to have other women at his disposal. Polygamy is doomed to pass also. For both these reasons, it is to be feared that this healthy custom will not be maintained in the future. This is a pity, and we ought to do our best to encourage its continuance.

~~177~~ ⁸⁴³ Many young married Natives leave their homes and go to Johannesburg to the mines for one or two years as soon as they see that their wife is pregnant. This is certainly on account of the above rule; but this desertion of the conjugal home is hardly to be approved.

~~751~~ ¹⁶⁴ As regards the whole medical treatment characteristic of this period, which is considered more or less as a disease, it has no value at all. ¹⁷⁷ The big intestinal worm is, of course, merely a product of Native imagination. The children sometimes suffer from lombrics, but not more than white children. Convulsions are frequent as a result of malaria and dysentery, and neither the ever present *milombyana* nor the

164 bi-monthly *biyeketa* nor the powder of the reed can do anything to
 731 prevent them. The habit of always carrying water in the calabash and
 177 of never emptying it entirely is harmful. Dr Garin, our medical
 missionary, examined some of these milombyana calabashes with the
 microscope and found them full of bacteria of all kinds. It is a splendid
milieu de culture for them. This milombyana custom is however hard
 to eradicate as the principle is deeply rooted in the Thonga mind: "The
 child grows by means of medicine" and even Christian converts respect
 it. They will relinquish it when a clearer notion of medical science
 has entered their heads — a time which is still remote, I fear!

000 From the missionary point of view, let us notice the analogy between
 the rite of the broken pot and Christian baptism as administered to
 children by most of the Churches. Natives readily accept a ceremony
 of benediction for the little ones, be it baptism proper or presentation
 with laying on of hands. But the heathen baptism is a baptism of
 smoke, and not of water — and is in relation to merely external
 dangers, while the Christian rite represents the purification of the soul
 from its sin and the new and pure life. Whatever may be the difference
 between the two customs, we find in the animistic rite a point of analogy
 which may help us to explain the spiritual sacrament and its deep
 significance.

II. ON CIRCUMCISION (See p. 94).

177 What judgment are we to pass on this custom to which some tribes
 797 still cling with great pertinacity? The teaching of endurance and of
 hunting has certainly some value, but these rites as a whole have very
 little worth and are useless in the new economy of South Africa. The
 obscene language allowed during the Ngoma certainly tends to pervert
 the mind of the boys and constitutes an immoral preparation for
 sexual life.

Have we nothing to learn from the Ngoma? More than two
 hundred thousand children of black South Africa are now attending
 our schools... more or less regularly. Hundreds of young men are
 boarding in our Normal Institutions. Do we always succeed in this
 great educational work? Its results are not entirely satisfactory,
 because most of the children do not stay long enough in the school to be
 properly taught. As soon as they have acquired some knowledge of
 reading and writing, they leave and go to the towns to earn money.

refused to communicate his secret. He belonged to the Chopi 757
tribe. The Ba-Pedi forbid sexual relations to lepers.

A nursing woman who has no milk must take a certain 853
Euphorbiacea shrub called *nete*, containing a milky juice, crush it
in the mortar, cook it in water and drink it. When a cow refuses to
feed her calf Natives smear the calf with the *ribvumbara* herb,
which has a pleasant odour. The cow smells this, and allows the
calf to suck.

The treatment of *sterility* has already been described (I. p. 190) 842
Mankhelu tried to cure it by digging a root of *Nemhe-nembe* 278
and one of *Nhlangowume*; he cooked both together, and ordered
the woman to eat them during a period of six days, mixing them
with her food. This drug was considered as "closing her" (*pfala*),
so that she would no longer have her "tihweti," and thus be enabled
to conceive. In the meantime, she had to undergo the *horola*
or *hondlola* rite, which I shall describe presently.

Small-pox, *nyedzane*, was on several occasions introduced by the 164
Whites, or by the Zulu armies on their return from their Northern
raids. There have been at least five or six epidemics in the
neighbourhood of Lourenço Marques during the last fifty years.

I had the opportunity of witnessing the last in 1918 in Rikatla and 751
thus obtained first-hand information on the way Natives treat this
disease and on their strange ideas concerning it. I published a
detailed account of these in the *S. A. Journal of Science*, July 1919,
and will give here a description of the most important of these
customs connected with small-pox amongst the Ba-Ronga. When
small-pox has invaded the country and reached the borders of
the territory of a clan, the headmen assemble at the chief's residence
and decide to proceed to the general inoculation of the population.
This is a remedy which they have long been accustomed to use.
They have noticed that the disease is milder when produced by
inoculation with the virus than when it *hahela*, i. e. flies to the
person. (There is some truth in this assertion; the protection
afforded however is not very effective, and severe and even fatal
cases often follow the inoculation. It does not always secure
immunity from a second attack.) The virus is provided by the
people of a neighbouring clan who have already been attacked by

751 the disease, and it is the *batukulu* of the chief, his nephews, the sons of his sisters, who are sent to procure it. Are they not the favourites of their maternal uncle? (I. p. 222). Nobody could suspect them of bringing misfortune into the village of their *bakokwana*! The particular ntukulu who must render this service to the country is designated by the bones. The bones also indicate the village of the neighbouring clan to which he must go to fetch the virus. The serous fluid is taken from old people or from children, who have no sexual intercourse; we already know the reason for this. The ntukulu inoculates himself and his comrades and returns home; when their pustules are ripe, they inoculate all the members of the clan who have not yet suffered from the disease.¹ From this day begins for the whole clan a distinct marginal period, with all the taboos accompanying the critical phases of the life of the community. No one is allowed to wash his body. Absolute continence is imposed on all. Salt is prohibited, as it is said to make the blood flow more quickly in the body and it may cause the wounds to become sore.

164 But in addition to the ordinary taboos, some other measures are taken which are dictated by the special nature of small-pox. This disease, amongst Black people, manifests itself in two forms, 751 which may be called the white and the black. The former is much 755 milder than the latter. In it the pustules are large, superficial, scattered all over the body and well separated from each other; the skin is discoloured over them and becomes whitish; they soon dry up and do not leave deep marks. In the second form, which is the confluent and haemorrhagic type of the disease, the pustules are small, black, continuous with each other, and full of blood; they soon discharge a nasty fluid; fever is high and death may intervene.

751 The whole aim of the treatment is to promote the mild, white form 755 of small-pox and to prevent the black form. It is therefore taboo to eat any meat containing blood, which is black and must therefore be avoided. On the contrary, fish meat is allowed because it is white and contains no dark blood. Another device of Native doctors to obtain this result is to place before the eyes of their patients grains of mealies, which are white like the desired pustules and are also similar to them in form, and to prevent their

¹ [Small-pox--analyst]

753 a sufferer from "inside trouble" says that "it bites" (luma),
 827 we know that it is a case of intestinal colic. But it becomes somewhat puzzling when a patient declares that he suffers from an intestinal worm which passes from his stomach into his neck and returns through his lungs, when it does not happen to take a fancy to remain in his head! "It makes a sound like *psie...psie...*," said an old man to me when describing this animal, which plays an important part in the medical science of the Natives (1). (I. p. 48.)

[164] There are, however, certain technical terms which are used to designate some diseases; thus *mukuhlwana* means cough and the mucous catarrh of the throat and nose. The ordinary *mbukulu* seems to be tonsillitis, while the special *mbukulu* is an affliction accompanied by fever, vertigo, delirium and madness, which is generally attributed to the malign influences of the spirits of the departed. — Hydrocele (*masangu*, or *masenge*) is wide-spread and well-known, as is also bilharzia, a form of haematuria called *shinyalu* or *ndjundwane*, which appears in severe forms and is due to a special parasite. Rheumatism is called *shifambo*, the runner, as it moves from spot to spot. Syphilis, imported long ago by Europeans, is universally known, and is, alas, so general in the neighbourhood of the town of Lourenço Marques that almost all Natives suffer from it. The Natives call it *buba* (probably from *bubo*). Gonorrhoea is of more recent importation, and dates — according to my informant Tobane — from the time of the construction of the Pretoria Railway; it is called *shikandjameti*, the disease which crushes the villages.

The eruptive diseases are perhaps those best recognized by the Natives. *Shintshinana* is the name for measles, but seems also applicable to scarlet fever. Small-pox is called *nyedzana*, and, as regards psychic or nervous troubles, the treatment of which

(1) I may here mention that the tape worm and the lumbric, both called *tinyokana*, small snakes, are very common amongst Natives, and are well known to them. They even think that these worms are necessary for digestion. An old woman had asked one of my colleagues to give her a vermifuge, and the drug had been successful. But she came back to ask him to give her another medicine to prevent all the inhabitants from escaping. Some of them must remain in her body "because," as the old woman said, "who would eat my food afterwards?"

we have just studied, they are attributed either to Heaven or to evil spirits or to the winds. The name of the *wutleka* disease is worthy of notice. This word comes from *wutla*, which means to rob, to seize; *wutleka*, the qualificative derivative (Thonga Grammar § 196) means the condition of something taken away. This would seem to be a passive meaning, as if the patient had been robbed by some agent. However, Mankhelu explains the term by saying: "The patient has stolen the *rirabi*" — "a *wutle rirabi*". *Rirabi* is very closely allied to a word meaning stick; the old doctor says it is the name of the disease. If this etymology be correct the patient would be considered as having taken the disease by a kind of robbery. But Native etymology must always be accepted with caution.

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All these names show how unprecise is the pathological knowledge of the Thongas.

2) As regards the *causes of diseases*, Thongas are groping in the grossest superstition. When a medical man wishes to treat a disease, he first tries to diagnose its cause. The Bantu *ñanga* does the same, only the difference is that he takes very little notice of the physical symptoms. There is no auscultation, no palpation, no examination of the secretions, blood, saliva, or urine, as these are disgusting and must be covered with sand as soon as possible! The great means of diagnosing a disease is the throwing of bones. There are three great causes of disease: the spirits of the gods, the wizards and the *makhumo*, defilement from death or from impure persons. A fourth less common cause is Heaven. The bones will reveal by the way in which they fall which is the one to be combated.

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3) Their ideas of *contagion* are not much in advance of their other pathological conceptions. The two most dreaded diseases in this respect are consumption (*lifuba*) and leprosy (*nhlokonho*). *Consumption* is by no means a new ailment due to civilisation, though it has increased enormously since Thonga boys have gone to the towns. A proof that it has been known for a long time is to be found in its great importance in the ritual. To the Thonga mind it is caused by the *makhumo*, i. e., the contamination of death, or the defilement resulting from contact with a woman in

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753 a state of physiological impurity. Hence the law ordering
 764 people affected with any of these kinds of makhumo to eat with
 751 spoons; they thus protect themselves against the poison which
 might cause them to become consumptive. A curious feature in
 the conception of *contagion* is the following. When Sokis died
 (I. p. 139) I heard some of those present saying to his sister, who
 was carrying a child on her shoulders: "Do not cry! If you cry
 the disease will jump to your baby!" There were two reasons
 for this warning; to cry in the presence of misfortune increases

753 the danger tenfold (compare p. 326); moreover the contagion of
 768 disease is especially to be feared in connection with the relatives
 of the sick or dead person. Hence the strange custom illustrated
 on plate p. 26: when a man dies of consumption his relatives are
 absolutely forbidden to eat any of the food he may have left. The
 "luma milomo" ceremony (I. p. 146) is of no use in this case. In
 former times all his mealies were burnt. Nowadays, however, it is
 allowable for people outside his family to buy and consume his
 provision. The large storehouse, illustrated on p. 26, contained
 the mealies harvested in Sokis' fields. These were sold to
 strangers, whilst relatives bought other mealies which were stored
 in the small hut for the use of his widow and children (p. 111).
 The same reason no doubt explains why the widow of a con-
 sumptive must *lahla khombo* with strangers, and not with men
 of the village (I. p. 206).

758 This peculiar idea of contagion also gives rise to the rules
 766 for *burying lepers*. Their relatives must not have anything to
 do with the burial (I. p. 508). Relatives-in-law can perform
 768 this painful duty, or possibly the family of the deceased leper
 will ask a friend to help them in their distress. "Have you
 prepared something as a reward for me?" he asks, and if this is the
 case he digs a grave just outside the wall of the hut where the
 patient died, removes the reeds of the wall, and pulls the corpse
 down into the hole without any funeral ceremony. The relatives
 are assembled far away on the square, and do not even dare to look
 on at the burial. All the implements are broken in the depths of
 the forest, at a great distance, for fear that a relative might touch
 one of them and die. Or they are left in the hut, and the whole
 village is at once removed.

733 bars, falling on the ground, spending their last penny to get drink beneath the eyes of the amused storekeeper, and he will realise what the unrestricted sale of drink to the Blacks means. It is simply horrible to contemplate; morally it is a most reprehensible, economically a most deplorable, physically a most dangerous state of things. I shall not deal here with the moral side of the question; let us merely consider what is the effect of this liquor trade on the health and on the economic future of the Black race.

1) There can be no doubt that it *kills* hundreds of Natives. Whatever stamina the race may possess, it cannot long resist the deadly effects of an inferior, unwholesome type of liquor absorbed in such enormous quantities. Coffee must be *kweba*, drunk in sips, but wine according to Natives, must be *nwa*, viz., drunk "à plein gosier" like water! We saw the young chief Shongele, heir of the Klosen clan, son of Magudju, die a miserable death from delirium tremens, and many other chiefs and sub-chiefs followed his example. For years they led a disgusting life, half drunk all the time, no longer able to preside over the tribal court, or to govern their people, having entirely lost the dignity of manner and the sense of position which was so remarkable amongst Bantu rulers, clapping their hands and abjectly entreating the White visitor to give them *sope* (the Native name for brandy).

● [164] Hand in hand with drunkenness goes immorality, and immorality as practised in that hell means the unchecked propagation of syphilis. According to medical authority, ninety per cent of the Natives round the town of Lourenço Marques are now contaminated. The girls who come on Saturday to sell their produce in the market and sleep two nights in the Native town, give themselves, for a few pence, to one of the hundreds of boys working on the wharf, and thus propagate the disease in the interior, and all this means the rapid destruction of a race which was made for life, and has great possibilities before it.

During the war of 1894, a *Portuguese* in the town of Lourenço Marques said to me cynically: "The *Natives* are a nuisance! Let them be given as much alcohol as they want and we shall soon get rid of them."

2) Alcohol will kill the Black race in the long run. It is already *ruining the kafir trade*. Those who uphold the liquor traffic, in order to increase the Revenue of the Colony, ought to obtain the opinion of the traders who do not deal in liquor. These merchants, who try to create new wants, to develop a healthy and useful trade amongst Natives, in a word to civilise them, would testify that selling strong drink to the Natives prevents their buying anything else. The craving for